

Talking Points for the ADDI

4 August 1986

Lebanon: Deteriorating Security Situation in West Beirut

One month after the entry of Syrian Special Forces units into West Beirut to impose a security plan on the rival militias and bring stability to the city, Damascus faces growing obstacles in its effort to impose order.

--We believe that the Syrian troops

were primarily charged with halting the infiltration of Pro-Arafat Palestinian fighters through illegal ports and with curtailing Hizballah activities in support of Arafat's men in the southern suburbs.

--We believe that the Syrian military presence in West Beirut is now roughly 1,500, up from the original 300 that entered 4 July.

Last week's car bombs and the ensuing heavy fighting between East and West Beirut--the first major eruption since last May--underscores the serious deterioration of the Syrian security plan.

--We believe that the first car bomb in Christian East Beirut was probably planted by pro-Syrian groups under the command of former Christian militia leader Elie Hubayqa, ousted in intense intra-Christian fighting last January.

--Another deadly car bomb in West Beirut on Tuesday was probably in retaliation for the earlier bombing of the Christians. The West Beirut bomb also caused massive casualties, and almost certainly prompted another explosion in East Beirut last Friday.

The latest car bombing coincided with stepped-up Syrian efforts to strengthen the Muslim front headed by Prime Minister Karami--a major source of increased tensions between Christians and Muslims. Under pressure, Christians could create an alternative cabinet--in effect establishing two governments.

25X1

--Sources of the US Embassy in Damascus state that Syrian Vice President Khaddam in late July unsuccessfully urged Lebanese Christian Information Minister to join a rump meeting of Muslim Cabinet members in opposition to Gemayel. The Minister, Joseph Skaff, may be forced to leave the country to avoid being squeezed between Damascus and President Gemayel.

--Damascus hopes to erode the legitimacy of Gemayel by persuading other Christians to join with Karami. One pro-Syrian Christian Cabinet minister (Abdallah Rassi, former President Franjiah's son-in-law) has already joined the newly formed rump ministerial committee.

Syrian efforts to expand the security plan to the Hizballah's stronghold in the city's southern suburbs is facing serious challenges from the extreme Shia Muslim fundamentalists.

--Reporting from the US Embassy in Beirut shows the southern suburbs are a Hizballah stronghold in which the radicals command support of the majority of its half million Shia residents.

--We believe the Syrian forces are incapable of carrying out an effective unilateral deployment without assistance from Amal.

Under current circumstances, the Syrian security plan appears to be at a standstill, and may even break down completely. Frustration over the collapsing security condition in West Beirut almost certainly will force Damascus to bolster its military presence in West Beirut.

--Last week advance headquarters elements of the Syrian 1st Armored Division moved into an area near the Lebanese border, [redacted] It is as yet unclear that this movement is more than just a readiness exercise; nonetheless, it suggests Syria is considering the option of a major show of force in the Bekaa Valley to intimidate Hizballah.

--Syria's long term security plans for West Beirut remain uncertain. We believe that Syrian credibility is on the line with its militia

allies in Lebanon, and even the appearance of setbacks in the southern suburbs could force Damascus to engage directly in local turf battles--prompting the entry of more Syrian troops into the Lebanese capital.

Talking Points Update for the ADDI

4 August 1986 1700

Lebanon: Syria Enters Hizballah Territory

Beirut Domestic Radio--controlled by Syria's closest ally, Amal--reported Monday that 850 predominantly Shia Lebanese army soldiers and 200 Syrian Special Forces entered the outlying areas to the southern suburbs despite Hizballah's opposition.

--The extent of Syrian penetration into Hizballah's inner turf remains unclear. It may be only a token deployment.

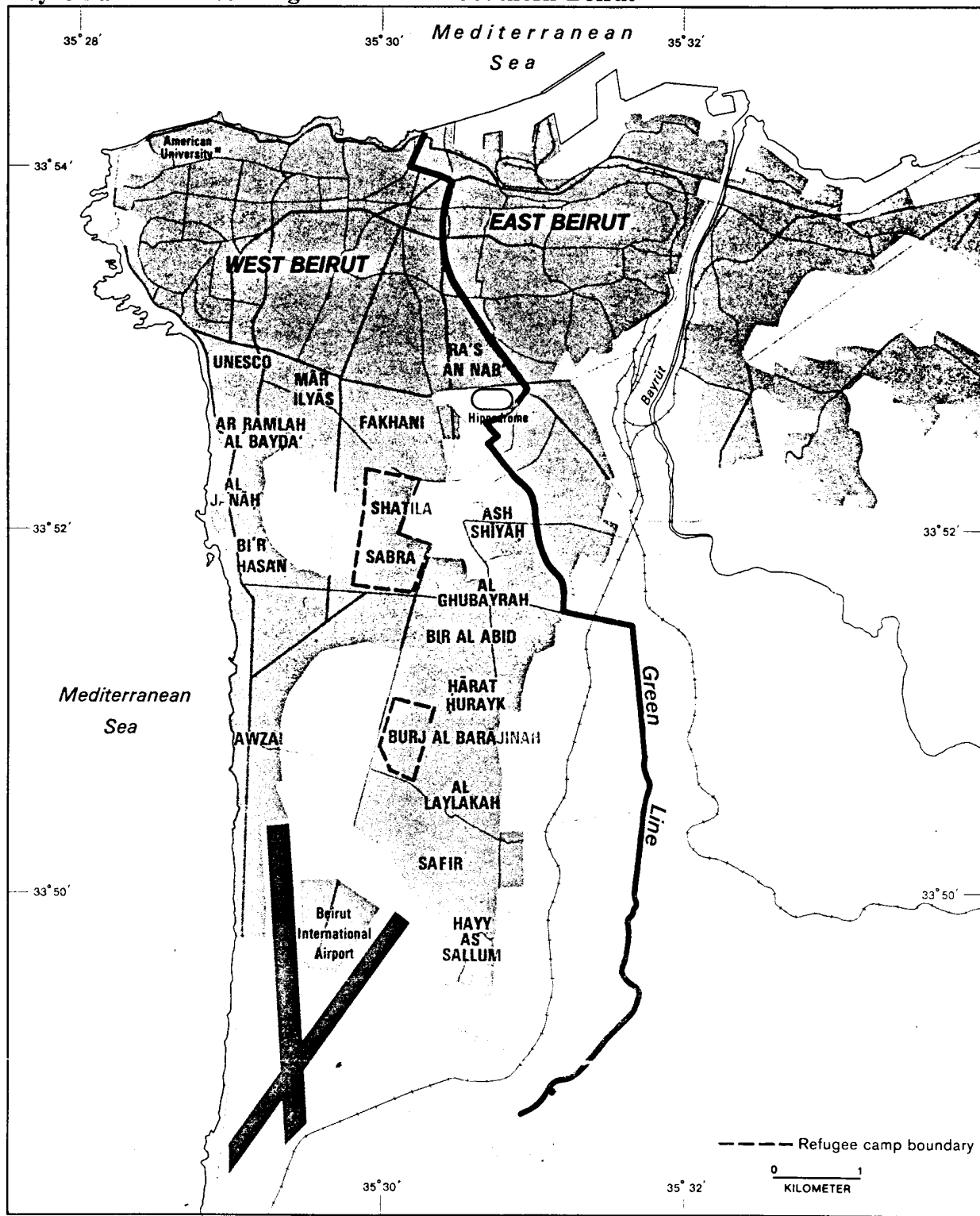
--The US Embassy in Beirut reports that Hizballah is erecting new defenses along the southern suburbs perimeters and are prepared for a major military showdown with Syria.

Syria's long term security plans for West Beirut remain uncertain. We believe that Syrian credibility is on the line with its militia allies in Lebanon, and even the appearance of setbacks in the southern suburbs could force Damascus to engage directly in local turf battles--prompting the entry of more Syrian troops into the Lebanese capital.

--Meanwhile, additional terrorist explosions occurred in East Beirut--one last Saturday and one on Monday--further increasing Christian-Muslim tensions. There is no information available on who is responsible.

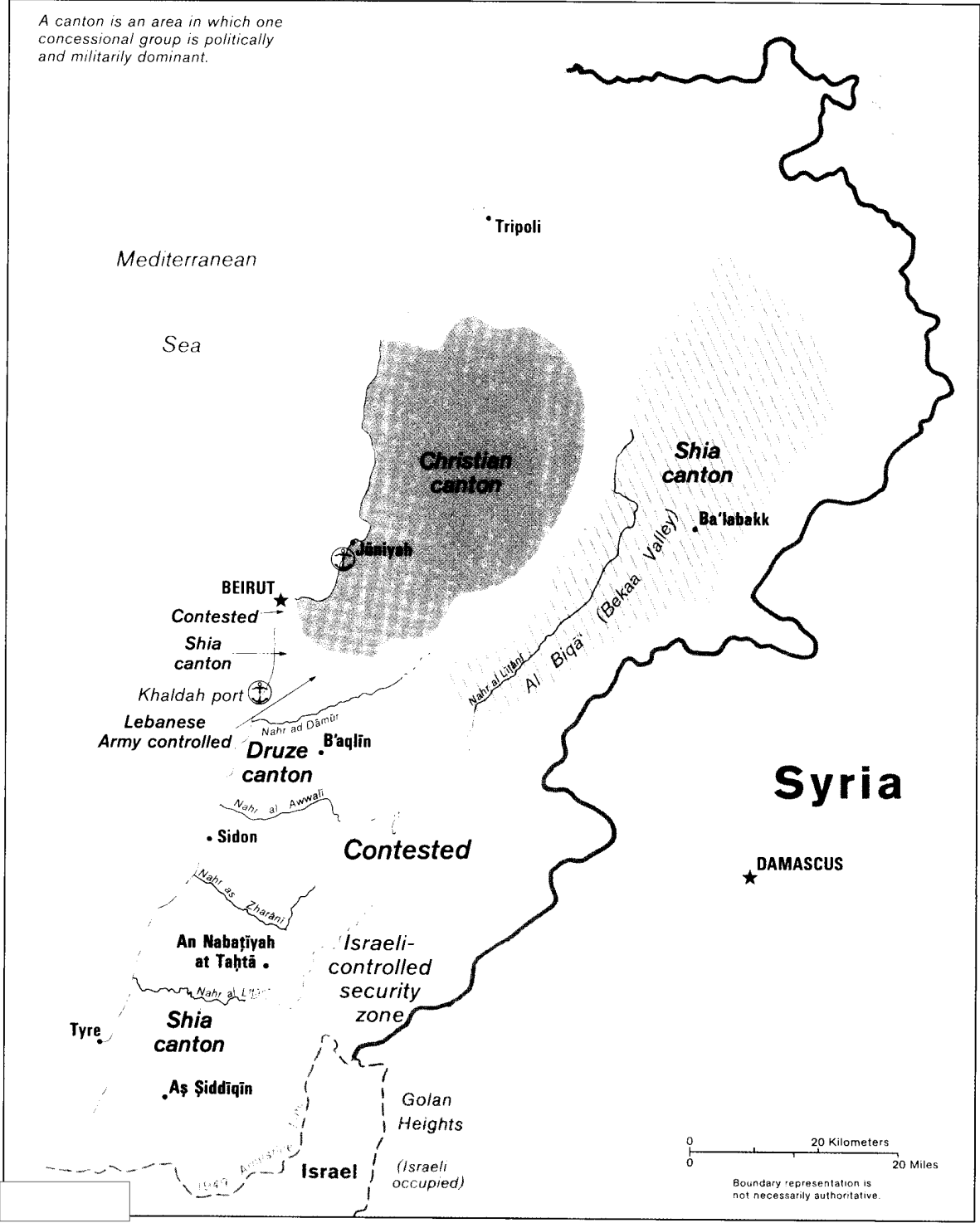
25X1

Key Shia-Controlled Neighborhoods in Southern Beirut



The Partition of Lebanon

A canton is an area in which one concessional group is politically and militarily dominant.



707766 5-86

25X1